**UPDATED GUIDANCE ON MASKS FOR HEALTH WORKERS AND THE PUBLIC**

**WHO - UPDATED SEPTEMBER-11-2020**

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has shared new guidance regarding mask wearing for health workers and the general public based on a review of evolving evidence. "The cornerstone of the response in every country must be to find, isolate, test and care for every case and to trace and quarantine every contact", said WHO’s Director-General.

**Masks should be used as part of an overall comprehensive strategy.**

**WHAT'S NEW:**

In areas with widespread transmission, the WHO advises medical masks for all people working in clinical areas of a health facility, not only workers dealing with patients with COVID-19. Doctors doing ward rounds in care units where there are no confirmed COVID-19 patients are required to wear a medical mask.

In areas with community transmission, the WHO now advises that members of the general public aged 60 and older and those with underlying conditions should wear a medical mask in situations where physical distancing is not possible. Medical masks should be worn by everyone during air travel.

The general public should wear non-medical masks where there is widespread transmission and when physical distancing is difficult, such as on public transport, in shops or in other confined or crowded environments.

Additionally, the WHO has released new guidance on cloth masks, recommending that they consist of at least three layers of different materials: an inner layer being an absorbent material like cotton, a middle layer of non-woven materials such as polypropylene (for the filter) and an outer layer, which is a non-absorbent material such as a polyester or a polyester blend.

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:**

WHO officials emphasize that masks worn by the public
- Must be worn correctly
- Cared for and kept clean to ensure that they are effective.

"People can infect themselves if they use contaminated hands to adjust a mask or repeatedly take it on or off," explained the Director-General.

"I cannot say this clearly enough. "Masks alone will not protect you from COVID-19."- Evidence shows face protections, including respirators or medical masks, and the recommended fabric combination can result in a large reduction of transmission of COVID-19.

Source: Linda Lacina, Editor, World Economic Forum

International Autoimmune Encephalitis Society